CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES.

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Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—JUDE.

ON THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

The death, and resurrection of Jesus, are facts, which cannot be too highly appreciated, nor too studiously investigated, by any, who intend becoming well instructed Christians. They constitute the splendid centre of the whole Christian System; and would, were they rightly apprehended, so strongly attract all our affections, as to render it impossible for us to be otherwise than in a state of union or fellowship one with another.

To illustrate this idea, we will suppose a magnet placed in the centre of a great circle, on the circumference of which are a multiplicity of the particles of steel. No sooner does the magnetic influence reach them, than each particle advances towards the centre, until they all come into actual contact, and form one compact body around the point of attraction; in which state of contiguity they stand united by that power, or influence, by which they were at first attracted.

Now we hesitate not to say, that if Christians so understood the genius of the Christian religion, as to be capable of appreciating the death and resurrection of Jesus, they would no more depart, by opposing sectarian influences, from this Christian centre, than do the particles of steel mentioned in the above illustration, from the magnet, by which they were at first irresistibly attracted. The love of Christ would *constrain* them, as the magnet attracts the

particles of steel; so that of all the individuals thus constrained, or attracted, one *body* would be formed, having one *spirit*, one *hope*, one *Lord*, one *faith*, one *baptism*, one *God* and *Father* of all: and this would effect the death of sectarism.

But if we suppose these particles of steel to be scattered promiscuously over the whole area of a great circle, with a magnet in the centre, and other magnets occupying various situations, some within, and some without its area, the influence which they would have upon the particles of steel, would be illustrative of the present condition of sectarian Christendom, or if you please, of mystery Babylon and her daughters. The different centres of attraction, would each embody around it a multiplicity of neighboring particles, so that instead of one body, surrounding the one centre, there would be as many bodies as centres of attraction.

Thus you will observe we have proved, by a very summary process, that sectarians, properly so called, are more influenced by their sectarian peculiarities, than by the death and resurrection of Jesus. For as the particles of steel embody themselves around the magnet which attracts them the most strongly, so do sectarians encircle, or crowd around those peculiarities which have the most influence on their minds. And it is useless for them to say in the face of this demonstration, that the death and resurrection of Jesus attracts them more strongly than do their own peculiarities, for it is mathematically certain that if this were the case, there could no more be more than one sect of Christians, than there could by the attraction of one magnet, be formed, separate parcels of the particles of steel.

A great part of the preaching of the present day, is, with respect to the minds of the people, just what we have supposed the plurality of magnets to be, with respect to the steel. It creates influences by which their minds are drawn off from the centre of Christianity, and placed on sectarian peculiarities. The preaching of an Arminian, for instance, attracts to the peculiarities of Arminianism, That of a Calvinist to those of Calvinism. That of a

Universalist to those of Universalism, and so of all the sects. Every sect has its peculiarity, its sectarian centre, and the minister of the dogmas of each of the sects, so ministers his peculiarities, as to create an influence by which to attract the minds of his hearers to that peculiarity by which his sect is distinguished from all others; and thus has christendom been divided into many factions, each surrounding its beloved point of attraction, as we have illustrated.

But this was far from being the case with the preaching of the Apostles. The Evangelist Luke has recorded in the book of Acts, four apostolic discourses, which ought to be considered as specimens of apostolic preaching. The first of these discourses is in the second, the second in the tenth, the third in the thirteenth, and the fourth in the seventeenth chapters of Acts, to each of which I invite the attention of my readers. By a careful, and candid examination of these discourses, it will I think be found, that our modern philosophical sermons, no more resemble them, than my pen resembles a ship mast! or a candle, the refulgent luminary of day! Jesus and the resurrection is the centre, the head, the foundation to which they all invariably point, and to which with original apostolic. or rather celestial eloquence, they attract the minds of their hearers!

Every point of doctrine pronounced by these inspired Ambassadors of Jesus, was directly predicated on his death and resurrection. Hence if they required their bearers to "believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God," it was in consequence of his having been "declared the Son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." If they commanded men to "repent," it was because "God had given unto all men, an assurance of a judgment to come, in raising his Son from the dead." If they commanded that men should be "baptized for the remission of sins," it was because "baptism doth now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." If they taught the doctrine of the "remission of sins," it was because "Jesus was delivered for our offences, and arose for our justification." If they expected the Divine comforter, or Monitor, who should "lead

them into all truth," it was because Jesus had promised "that if he went away,"—arose from the dead, he would "send the Comforter, who should abide with them forever." If they taught that the "vile bodies of the Saints should be changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body," it was because "Christ had risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." If their preaching inspired Christians with the "hope of eternal life," it was "by the resurrection of Jesus that they were begotten to this living hope." If they continued "steadfast in the breaking of bread," it was that they might "show forth his death as often as they did it." And in one word, if their preaching was in any degree beneficial to the myriads, who through their instrumentality were translated from darkness to light, it was because they were "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Jesus and the resurrection was a theme on which the Apostles dwelt with rapture in all their preaching. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth, the souls of believers were filled with rejoicing by the annunciation of remission of sins, and eternal life through the name of a crucified, risen Jesus! They seem never to have dreamed of effecting the conversion of sinners by an exhibition of the doctrines of eternal union, eternal justification, universal salvation, or any other philosophical notions, such as in this speculative age, afford materials for a perpetual roar of "*profane and vain babbling*." By reading with impartiality the above apostolic discourses, together with Paul's declaration at Corinth concerning the gospel which he preached, there can be no room, for any candid intelligent man to mistake with respect to the particulars of their message. "For I delivered unto you first of all," says the Apostle, "that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures," and immediately adds, "*whether it were I, or they*," (the other Apostles,) "*so we preached, and so ye believed*." Hence we conclude necessarily, that it was by

the annunciation of these fundamental matters of fact, that sinners in the days of the Apostles obtained redemption, by faith in the blood of the Son of God, and a living hope of the eternal life, brought to light by the gospel, and that, these things being so, every Evangelist in the present day ought to copy in all his preaching, the matter as well as the form of these apostolic discourses, seeing that "we have them," as Paul says, "for examples." And we ought to do this, under the solemn recollection, that Jesus has never authorised any man to preach any other gospel than that which Paul preached at Corinth, and that the Apostle has denounced a curse against both men and angels, who shall preach any other!

Upon this centre, the death and resurrection of Jesus, I, as an Evangelist, am resolved to stand. The ocean of speculation, may continue to toss, and foam around me, and to lash this permanent rock with all its angry billows, but I will not be moved! As a child in the midst of alarms, clings close to the breast of its mother, so will I, with all the powers of my soul, maintain my attachment to these inestimable facts. Once I was like a bewildered mariner, on a tempestuous ocean, driven with the winds and tossed, afar from my home, with a fluctuating compass, and but little ballast: My mind was wrecked on the perpetually revolving wheel of human opinion, and philosophical speculation, about matters far beyond my reach! But Heaven be thanked! I have now found the rock of ages which cannot move! The attraction of this celestial magnet, with all its wonder working influences, has established me in the place of my rest, where I am resolved to abide forever: and whence I will sound the silver trumpet of the primitive gospel, inviting all who have ears to hear, to abandon the sea of speculation, with all its whirlpools and tempests, and to enjoy with me, the divine privileges of a religion of facts!

On this permanent foundation, I occupy a position, more elevated than did Moses, when from Pisgah's summit, he viewed the land of promise. I look back through the medium of the Old Testament light to the creation of the world. I behold a host of ancient worthies whose eyes

with prophetic penetration, pierce the veil of futurity, and sparkle with gladness while they contemplate "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory following these." I hear all the holy prophets who ever lived in any age since the foundation of the world, pointing out determinately, Jesus the Messiah, who should "abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light by the gospel." I see Moses making all things after the pattern which was presented to him in the mount, and thereby exhibiting the whole gospel in miniature, hundreds of years before it was promulged in its divine form on the day of Pentecost. I contemplate Malachi the last of Israel's prophets, who in closing the celestial galaxy of predictions which terminated in Jesus as the son of God, the Saviour of men, pointed to John the Baptist; the messenger of Jesus, the harbinger of Messiah, and as my eyes wander down the stream of time, John himself is presented to my view. In the wilderness of Judea he cries, "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—The inhabitants of Jerusalem, Judea, and all the regions about the Jordan, in crowds throng the margin of the swelling stream, and are baptized by him in its limpid waters, confessing their sins. I see Jesus himself descending into, and emerging out of the swelling flood. "Behold," says John, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." "This is my beloved Son," says the eternal Father, "in whom I am well pleased." "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me," says Jesus, "because he has annointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to publish the acceptable year of the Lord." But time would fail me were I to attempt to sketch the life of Jesus, or to delineate the thousandth part of the wonders of love, which pass before my ravished eyes, while from this elevated pinnacle I survey Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah.

From the retrospection of these astonishing scenes, I therefore turn my eyes prospectively to the conquests of the gospel. With rapture I contemplate its triumphs, while with tongues purified with heavenly fire, the primitive

preachers, in consistency with that simplicity which is in Christ, made the glad tidings to resound unto the ends of the earth. I pass with precipitancy over the barren deserts of apostacy, where the beast with all his bloody worshippers preside, and where tenfold Egyptian darkness broods around, and rejoice that now the millennial day begins to dawn. That now the truth begins to burn the *mystic mother*, and her *daughters*, and that she will be utterly burned with fire, "for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." The universal spread of the gospel, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life, fill me with such exquisite delights, that I can often say, "*I am satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou hast made me to drink of the river of thy pleasures.*"—EDITOR.

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWING FROM THE UNIVERSALISTS.

No. II.

THE second reason which I will assign for withdrawing from the Universalists, is, *that I was incapable by the preaching of Universalism, to reform sinners, or in other words, to convert them from the error of their ways.*

It was a maxim with me, and if I mistake not, it was a maxim with the Universalists generally, that truth will always produce better effects in the human mind, than error, and that it is to the mind of man, what food and medicine are to his body:—it heals and invigorates, while on the other hand, error debilitates and poisons.

Now as I took this for granted while a Universalist, it was impossible for me, consistently with those principles of probity and candor which I was resolved should ever characterize me as a religious Teacher, to remain longer than I did, a minister of Universalism. For after experimenting again, and again, upon such as were morally diseased, I found my doctrine to be as inefficacious in the removal of moral maladies, as are the nostrums of the most ignorant quack, in removing those of the body!

My intention while preaching of Universalism, was to ameliorate the condition of man. I thought I perceived, that the doctrines of other sectaries could never so revolutionize the world, as to produce "*good will among men.*" I panted with intense desire for the reformation of sinners, and labored with the zeal of a Methodist, and the diligence of an apostle, to effect this object! But alas! I ascertained that my labor was all in vain. I constrained many by my arguments to reject the doctrine of endless punishment; but they changed their opinions with a laugh, without any change of moral character! My preaching never caused a "*Felix to tremble,*" nor a jailor to exclaim, "*what shall I do to be saved?*" That godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of, was a sorrow to which my converts were strangers. "The broken and contrite heart which trembles at the word of the Lord," never trembled under my preaching, except through fear that I would lull sinners in their carnal security, and precipitate them down the slippery steeps of vice, into "*the blackness of darkness forever.*"

Now under these circumstances what ought I, as an honest man, to have done? I do not propose this question to the bloated bigot! nor to the green eyed sectarian! Let the sober minded rationalist answer me. How ought a physician under such circumstances to have acted? He finds his medicine to be not only inefficacious, but pernicious; and in the mean time obtains a knowledge of another, which by the most satisfactory experiments, has been proved to be a sovereign remedy for those maladies prevalent in the country in which he lives. Will any consideration under such circumstances exculpate him from the most severe censure, if he continue administering a medicine which he has proved to be inefficacious, to the exclusion of one, which he knows to be remedial? A physician who should do so, would be no better than a murderer! And such a physician should I have been, had I, after obtaining a knowledge of the *ancient gospel*, continued administering my Universalian nostrums.

It is now about eighteen months since I commenced preaching the simple gospel, as it is in the New Testament,

or in other words, as it was preached by Peter, Paul, and in short by all the apostles, and I am happy to say that during this time, I have been instrumental in reforming many stubborn sinners. And if I am to judge of doctrines by their effects, as I would of medicines, I am certainly as much bound to prefer that which I have last preached, as would be a physician, to prefer the medicine most efficacious in removing disease.

In reasoning on the fitness of Universalism to remove the moral maladies of our species, we may easily deceive ourselves. Our reasonings on matters of every day occurrence, are often fallacious: and is it not probable, that they are much more frequently so, with respect to things concerning which we have not the same means of acquiring information? Many men have been thought to reason plausibly, with respect to the practicability of inventing the Perpetual Motion, and whole counties, and states have been agitated by such reasoning, with the expectation of seeing a wonderful machine in operation! But such Utopian schemes have always been deficient in one very important particular, experiment. One ounce of experiment, in all matters of speculation, is worth a pound of reasoning.—How many beautiful theories, which have cost their advocates the labor of many years, have in one hour, by one truth-telling experiment, been exploded! Thus will it hereafter be, with scores of religious theories. My own once beloved system of Universalism, was in this way wrested out of my hands, and though the parting with it cost me many a scalding tear, still, after bringing it to the test of experiment, I could retain it no longer.

It is cruelty in my former associates, to impute my recent change of sentiment to sinister motives. I would invite the Editors of the "Star," to plunge a poisoned dagger to my heart, provided it would be the means of appeasing their wrath, and of enabling them to do me justice in future. I was never offended with the Universalists because "they would not make me a Pope." No, no! They gave me as much honor as I deserved. I did not withdraw from them because they "would not give me a higher salary." I always opposed salary preaching. I have been offered a

salary in a number of instances, but I never would receive one. About the time of my reputed apostacy, my friends among the infidels, with some of the Universalists, were making for my benefit a missionary purse, with the design, as they said, of christianizing the heathens in the eastern states; and some of my friends in Cincinnati, were, as they have since told me, about to request me to settle with them, as a minister of Universalism. Had I been seeking money, and the "popular current," as my opposers accuse me of doing, I could have floated easily in a current composed chiefly of the cash of infidels, and have been saluted by the huzzas of thousands, by remaining with the Universalists. If popularity were my object, why did I not seek a place in some popular sect? Why did I become an advocate for the simple, unpopular, matter of fact religion of the despised Nazarene?

Ah! gentlemen, you may exhibit your evil surmises as much as you please. You may persecute a wandering pilgrim, who for the sake of Christ has not only suffered the loss of his Universalism, but who is willing to lose his life, and all things, so that he may be found in Christ, and be approbated by him at the last day; but you cannot deprive him of his reward. You may make fools laugh, and infidels mock! You may blind the eyes of the simple for a season, and make glad the hearts of the wicked by promising them life; but remember, I beseech you to remember, that "when they say peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon them."—[Editor.

THE RESURRECTION.

But some one will say, how can the dead be raised up? and with what kind of body do they come? Thou simpleton! what thou sowest is not quickened unless it die. And as to what thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but naked grain, perhaps of wheat or of some of the other kinds: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to each of the seeds its proper body. All

flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh indeed of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of fowls. And there are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial: but different indeed is the glory of the celestial, and different that of the terrestrial. The glory of the sun is one, and the glory of the moon another, and the glory of the stars another: moreover, star excelleth star in glory. Wherefore, even the resurrection of the dead is possible.—*Macknight's Translation.*

In this quotation, the Apostle meets the Infidel on his own ground, and demonstrates, that the resurrection of the dead, is a fact, no more inexplicable, nor improbable, than are those things in the vegetable, and animal kingdoms, which he here, for the sake of illustration enumerates, which have obtained the universal credence of philosophers in all ages.

Thou simpleton! Paul had a very contemptible opinion of that supercilious philosophy which bloats its possessor with the pride of human learning, and prompts him to precipitancy in urging objections against facts which he does not understand. Wise men, in all ages, have considered the answering of a question before we understand it, a mark of folly; and it is for this reason, that the Apostle in the present case, calls his opponent a simpleton. He was prepared, as we have seen in the course of this work, to present a host of ear, and eye witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, who were willing to seal their testimony with their own blood, and to suffer every privation for the gospel of Jesus; and he therefore had a right to conclude, that the man who under such circumstances would continue to cavil because he could not understand the *modus operandi* of the fact, after the fact had been established by such testimony, was a simpleton.

Men are strangely prone to scepticism, in things of a religious nature. They startle, and murmur at every difficulty that presents itself on the pages of revelation, and complain that religion, or rather that Christianity is so exceedingly mysterious that they can in no wise understand its doctrines, when at the same time, many of them would never have understood their spelling-books, had they not

studied them with more diligence than they have their bibles; and all of them, give their assent to things as incomprehensible, as are any of those facts, in which Christ and his Apostles require us to believe.

I remember very well, an attack made on me by an Atheist during my travels in Indiana, some four or five years since, which will illustrate this fact. He was a pert, bold, intelligent young man, a stickler for Owenism, and strong in the faith, that all faith is the effect of superstition! Taking his seat just in front of me, he drew his handkerchief across his mouth, with an air which among city dandies is considered to be infallible proof of high life, and good breeding, and thus addressed me: "I have heard your discourse to-day," said he, "and was much pleased with it, with the exception of one particular. You frequently spoke of a GREAT BEING, whom you denominated God. Now," said he, "I should like to be informed, how you know there is any such Being." "All nature," said I, "and all the harmonies of nature, proclaim to me, the existence of an intelligent First Cause." "Admitting," said he, "that there may be such a Being, what is He?" "A Spirit," said I. "A Spirit!" replied he; "and what is a Spirit?" I must acknowledge that I was somewhat disconcerted at this last question, but remembering Solomon's admonition, "answer a fool according to his folly," I immediately resolved to ask my opponent a very foolish question, "I will, said I, "also ask thee a question. What is a corn stalk?" With all his atheistical wisdom, he could not answer me! He was utterly at a loss! "Ah!" said I, "if you cannot tell me the properties of an object which you have seen a thousand times, neither will I tell you, what are the properties of a spirit which I have never seen!"

At another time I was introduced to a sceptical physician, who informed me that he could not believe the christian religion to be true, in consequence of its being so exceedingly mysterious. "Are there no mysteries," said I, "doctor, in your profession?" "Not such," said he, "as there are in christianity." "Can you," said I, "explain to me the principles of *miasmata*." He could not. "Can you tell me how the *hair* grows on my head? or the *wool*

on a *sheep's back?*" He could not. "Can you explain to me, breathing a *priori?*" or "can you tell me how the *sun shines*, or a *grain* of wheat germinates?" I was going on to ask the doctor some other questions, but he recollected that he had a patient in the country, who needed his attendance, and excused himself for withdrawing, giving me his promise however, to converse with me on the subject, at some subsequent period. And so I parted with the doctor, not without telling him that if he rejected christianity, in consequence of its being mysterious, I should in my turn be under the necessity to reject his system of medicine for the same reason; for I could certainly go farther in removing what he called the mysteries of the christian religion, than he had done in removing those physical mysteries connected with his profession.

What thou sowest is not quickened unless it die. Thomas Paine in his Age of Reason, when reviewing this passage, retorts, by saying, "*Thou fool Paul, that which thou sowest, is not quickened, unless it die not!*" But it is probable, that Mr. Paine did not understand the scriptural usage of the word *death;* and this is the more probable, as it is manifest from the gross blunders which he frequently makes in attempting to quote the scriptures, that he was shamefully ignorant of the Bible.

Jesus on one occasion, when speaking of the living, says, "Let the dead bury their dead." The Apostle Paul represents sinners as being "dead in trespasses and sins." In the church at Sardis, there were some "who had a name to live, but were dead." Some of the seven churches of Asia, were likewise threatened with the "second death." Men were said to be dead to sin, when they were righteous, and dead to righteousness when they were the slaves of sin: and christians were represented as being "dead to the law by the body of Christ." Any person who will read the scriptures with some little attention, may ascertain conclusively, that the inspired writers used the word death in various acceptations, and if so, then no valid objection can be urged against the use which Paul makes of it in this place. It is evident, he did not suppose that the vegetative speck, or seminal principle of the grain became extinct; and consequently that he did not intend to express

such extinction. And if so, the man who under such circumstances, would attempt, as Mr. Paine has done, to make him an offender for a word, not only proves himself to be a pitiful caviller, but shows, that his own cause, were it not weak, would not need such slender props.

The design of the apostle in calling the attention of the infidel to the grain of wheat,—the different kinds of flesh,—the bodies celestial and terrestrial, was to convince him, that the same power who was the author of these incomprehensible facts, was also competent to the raising of a dead man to life; and that these facts, were in the reason and nature of things as incredible, nay more incredible, than is the resurrection of the dead! Hence he in the first place supposes a grain of wheat deposited in the earth. It germinates;—a green blade is seen piercing the surface;—it grows apace;—a stalk of considerable size and strength succeeds it, having many blades;—it terminates in a head, having many grains! Is there any thing more wonderful than this, in the resurrection of the dead? Suppose we had never seen the vegetative process, and Paul had given us a description of it, would we not have been as sceptical with respect to it, as many now are, with respect to the resurrection? A green stalk! and many green blades! and thirty, sixty, or one hundred grains, all from one grain!—Astonishing! Incredible! The resurrection of the dead is a small matter, when compared to this! We only expect that the one human body which is deposited in the grave, will be reorganized, and changed so as to form one glorious body, not thirty, sixty, nor one hundred, as is the case with the grain of wheat; and this is certainly no more incredible, than that it was at first organized by the power of the Highest. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." That power, whatever the infidel may please to call it, who made us in the first instance, can as easily organize our clay the second time, as it can "*give to each of the seeds, its proper body.*"

All flesh is not the same flesh. The Apostle having foiled the Infidel with his own weapons, by showing him those astonishing facts necessarily connected with the germination of a grain of wheat; in the next place proceeds to call his attention to other physical wonders, the existence

of which the Infidel could not deny. *There is one flesh indeed of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of fowls.* This flesh, different as it is, is all flesh,—it is all matter. God organized it, with all its differences,—with all its instincts! you believe this, and in believing it, you give your assent to facts, for which you can no more account, than for those things to which you object, in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

And there are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial. The earth, and the sun for instance. Both these bodies are material! Why then is the sun luminous, and the earth opaque? The moon and the stars also, are material bodies! Why then do they differ in glory? In assenting to these astonishing facts, do you not assent to things as mysterious, —as inexplicable,—as incredible, as are any of those doctrines of the resurrection, to which you object? After contemplating these astonishing productions, "why should any man think it a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?"

Wherefore even the resurrection of the dead is possible. Our translation, contrary to the whole drift of the Apostles argument, makes him to say in this place, "*so also is the resurrection of the dead.*" But nothing was farther than this, from his meaning. He did not design shewing by the grain,—the different kinds of flesh,—and the sun, moon and stars, the manner in which the dead would be raised. His intention was to evince that a man who would assent to these physical mysteries, and afterwards refuse to believe the doctrine of the resurrection, from the force of such testimony as that presented in its behalf, was a simpleton; and he therefore concludes his argument by saying "*wherefore,*" (for the reasons given above,) "*the resurrection of the dead is possible,*"—cannot be denied, on the supposition of its impracticability.

Men would save themselves incalculable toil and jeopardy, by a methodical, rational procedure, in arriving at their conclusions with respect to the truth, or falsehood of Christianity. We ought never to permit any of its doctrines to perplex our minds, until we have first matured its evidences. If the historical evidences be such as to establish its divine origin, no man can without infinite hazard, re-

ject its doctrines. If its evidences be good, we are bound by every sacred obligation, to submit to all its requisitions: and it is very unseemly, not to say presumptuous, for a being of yesterday to scale the throne of the Almighty, and in the impetuosity, and vanity of his mind, to determine what doctrines ought, or ought not to have been revealed for the benefit of mankind; for the fact is, that the wisest man under heaven, is just as incompetent to frame a religious system, adapted to our nature, as he would be to create a world, or to manage the affairs of the Universe!

EDITOR.

QUERIES ANSWERED.

1. *Is God changeable?* 2. *Is the Devil infinite?* 3. *Is the soul naturally immortal?*

Answer. I heartily regret that you should consume so much of your time in disputing about questions which have not profited those who have been exercised by them, and so little of it, in endeavoring to become holy. Do you not remember, "that without holiness, no man can see the Lord?"

Now suppose God be unchangeable, as he certainly is, will it follow, that we ought not to repent, and obey all his commandments? And what if the Devil be not infinite, as he certainly is not, is it certain that he may not ruin us forever? A spider you know is not infinite, but it can kill the body, and remove us from this earthly habitation, forever and ever! Six drops of arsenic, are not infinite, but they have in them the power of causing a death, which were it not for the resurrection, would be endless. Who then can tell how much the soul of man may be damaged by satan and sin? 'Tis folly, 'tis madness, to tamper with such dangerous enemies! The sophistry of a heart in love with sin, may ruin us forever!

You ask "whether the soul is naturally immortal." Suppose it be not, does it follow that it may not be spiritually immortal? You are disposed I perceive to wade in deep waters. Take heed that you do not drown yourself, in fruitles speculations. You no doubt think you are get-

ting to be very wise: but I can assure you, that you are a mere pigmy! What is the soul? What is the spirit? What is the body of a man? How does the sun shine? How does the wind blow? How does the blood circulate in your veins? How does your spirit animate your clay? How many parts of your body are put in motion when you raise your right hand from the table to your forehead?—O yes! you are wonderfully wise! Be cautious lest your wisdom ruin you!

Go home and take your bible in your hand:—read it honestly, and diligently. Make it the man of your council. Learn what the gospel of Jesus is; and obey it: for it was "to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." Study also the law of Christ, and obey it; and it will not be long until you will cease to annoy your neighbors with useless questions, and to subvert them with "vain jangling," "knowing not what you say, nor whereof you affirm." "Let every man please his neighbor for his good unto edification."—EDITOR.

Query. You frequently speak against sectarians, and sectarian peculiarities:—are you not aware, that you, yourself, are a sectarian, and as zealous an advocate for your own sectarian peculiarities, as are others for theirs?

Answer. I do not blame Christians for being a sect; nor do I think they can adhere with too much tenacity to Christian peculiarities: for Christians were always a "sect every where spoken against," and in consequence of their attachment to certain peculiarities, were from time immemorial denominated "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The primitive Christians had their peculiarities, and were as warmly attached to them, as modern sectarians are to theirs; but then their peculiarities differed very essentially from ours. The death and resurrection of Jesus, were facts so peculiarly interesting, and of such infinite importance in the estimation of the first Christians, that all those peculiarities in which the unregenerate delight, and by which sectarians are at present divided, dwindle to insignificancy in the comparison. "To know Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death," was knowledge, "for which they were willing to suffer the loss of all

things, and to count them but dregs, that they might win Christ;" and hence "the end of their conversation was Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Around this celestial magnet, their one body was formed; while the spirit of Christ, was the magnetic influence, by which they were all attracted to one centre, and by which they were filled with love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The death and resurrection of Jesus was their fundamental peculiarity, which by its influence upon their hearts, eventuated in all those peculiar acts of obedience, for which the primitive Christians were conspicuous.

But alas! how has the gold changed! How has the fine gold become dim! In modern times we see one sect surrounding a peculiar notion about Psalm singing, as is the case with the Seceders! This is their peculiarity! Two other sects, the Orthodox Methodists, as they are now called, and the Radicals, are drawn asunder by certain peculiar notions about the Methodist discipline! These notions are the magnets, peculiarities, or sectarian centres of these sects! Arminianism is the point of attraction with some! Calvinism with others! Universalism with others! Socinianism with others! Anna Lee with others! and with some a man may be given over to Satan, for the destruction of soul and body, if he refuses to attend class meeting! It would be an endless task to enumerate the peculiarities of sectarians, by which the Mother of harlots,—the church of Rome, and her daughters,—those sects which are embodied around any peculiarity of their own invention, have been, and are now intoxicated.

After what has been said above, I think I may safely acknowledge, that I am a zealous advocate for my sectarian peculiarities. But what are they? Universalism? Nay. Arminianism? Nay. Calvinism? Nay. What then? The death and resurrection of Jesus! The gospel which Paul preached at Corinth! Away with all peculiarities which are not expressed in the gospel, and law of Christ! They are in my conception, as trifling as are the rattles of children; and none but children will quarrel about them!

I have already, in another place, demonstrated by a plurality of magnets, and the particles of steel, that all who

are attracted by Jesus, or who love him better than their own peculiarities, will as necessarily form but one body around him as their centre, as the particles of steel, will, by the attraction of one magnet, be formed into one body: and as I know that I cannot mistake in this matter, I am inspired with boldness, not only to "*preach the word*," but to "*reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*" "*The Word*," relates exclusively to Jesus as the Lord of All! and to those good things which he will freely give to all his believing obedient subjects. But as to such as obey not the *word*, or *gospel* of Jesus, but "teach for doctrines the commandments of men," they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" and ought to be reproved and rebuked for their disobedience.

Yes! I too have my sectarian centre! But it is the very root and fountain, spring and foundation of salvation! "The blood of Jesus, speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;" and while I have an ear to hear, or a heart to understand, the enchanting melody of its voice shall be the music of my soul. Let Sectarianism croak; and let its votaries, like the madman "cast about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say we are in sport," still Jesus shall be my theme,—my exceeding great reward.—EDITOR.

Queries by the Editor. If sectarians do not love one another in this world, and there be no change after death, how can they love one another in the next world? Will Heaven be divided into separate apartments for their accommodation?

If all such sectarians as are qualified for heaven, do love one another here, why do they not walk together as children of the same Father, and prove by their works, that they do love in deed, and in truth, and not in word, and tongue only?

If only the votaries of one sect, will ever get to heaven, be so kind as to inform me, what sect that is, and by what name it is called?

Is the Christian religion divine, or human? or is it partly human, and partly divine? If it be divine *in toto*, is there

any thing human in it? and if there be nothing human in it, are men preaching it, when they are retailing their dreams, notions, and speculations?—EDITOR.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES.

BY DR. PRIESTLEY.

It is not a little remarkable, that from the time of the captivity in Babylon to that of Christ, a period of six hundred years, there did not appear among the Jews any person who pretended to work a miracle; nor was there among them any one who pretended to the gift of prophecy from the time of Malachi, which was about four hundred years before Christ. This is a sufficient proof that the Jews were not a credulous nation. For had they been disposed to believe in miracles, or prophecy, persons enough would have arisen to take advantage of that disposition, as was the case with the Catholics for many centuries. In proportion to the credulity of some, have always been the arts of imposition in others. This remarkable fact demonstrates a general dread in the Jewish nation of assuming the prophetic character without authority. Whatever liberties of other kinds they might take with respect to morality, this species of impiety was not among them.

From these circumstances it may be taken for granted, that pretensions to miracles among the Jews were sure of being rigorously scrutinized, so that they would not obtain credit unless the facts were indisputable. This would have been the case had the object of the miracles even been any thing favorable to their religion, and to their wishes; but much more so if it had been any thing that they did not wish to favor. And in this predicament was Jesus when he first assumed the character of a person sent from God, and empowered to work miracles, in proof of his divine mission.

The only person whom the Jews expected in the character of a prophet, preceded by Elijah, they also expected in the character of a king, viz. their promised *Messiah*, the person announced under that title by Daniel, as to *come in the clouds of heaven*, with power and great glory. And

it is remarkable that about the time of the appearance of Jesus there was a general expectation of the speedy coming of this Messiah. But they naturally imagined that he would be a great prince, who would rescue their nation from their subjection to the Romans, and bring all the world into subjection to them.

Had any person assumed *this* character, it is not impossible, but that the Jewish nation, prejudiced as they were, might have been disposed to favour his pretensions, and have been less scrupulous in their examination of the proofs of his mission. But Jesus made no such pretensions. He never, indeed, denied that he was the Messiah; but his appearance by no means corresponded to their ideas of him. He did not come in the clouds; and so far was he from assuming kingly power or state, that he was brought up a common carpenter; he chose his companions from persons of an equally low rank with himself; and he declined all particular intercourse with the chiefs of his nation. Besides the meanness of his parentage and education, the place of his nativity (at least that from which he received his denomination) was a despicable town in Galilee, a part of the country which was thought meanly of, compared with Judea properly so called.

The only advantage that Jesus, previous to his appearing in a public character had, was his being announced by John the Baptist as a great prophet, one much greater than himself, and one who would work miracles. For this seems to be implied in his saying that *he would baptize with the Holy Spirit.* This circumstance would, no doubt excite great attention to Jesus, and a favorable one; and had he appeared in the character that they confidently expected their promised Messiah would assume, he might with somewhat more ease have imposed upon them. But this advantage only respected the common people, who regarded John as a true prophet. By the chief priests and rulers of the nation, to whom John had paid no court, he was regarded in a much less favorable light. Nothing, therefore, that John had said, or done, would dispose them to give Jesus a more favorable reception; but on the contrary would lead them to regard him with a jealous eye. And this jealousy was soon inflamed to hatred and the blackest

malignity, though he performed miracles which they could not deny to be such, as soon as he appeared, like John, to pay no court to *them*, but on the contrary openly to expose their hypocrisy and other vices, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. In this state of open opposition to all persons in possession of power, and also to all the learned and most intelligent persons in the country, the conduct of Jesus would, no doubt, be most narrowly watched; and any thing in him looking like artifice could not fail to have been exposed, and he would have been punished as an impostor and blasphemer.

Notwithstanding these deep-rooted prejudices, and these great disadvantages, the miracles of Jesus were so numerous, and so conspicuous, that no doubt was entertained of them. Great numbers openly avowed themselves to be his disciples, and even received him as their promised Messiah; and they whose prejudices would not suffer them to acknowledge *this*, did not deny his miracles, but ascribed them to some other cause than the power of God.

Let us, then, consider the circumstances of miracles which produced so wonderful an effect; and we shall find that, extraordinary as it was, the cause was equal to it. The miracles were so circumstanced, that it was impossible to suspect that there was any imposition in the case. As Nicodemus acknowledged, no man could have done the things that Jesus did, if God had not been with him.

1. The number of the miracles performed by Jesus was beyond all example in any preceding time, even those of Moses and Elijah, if we except the standing miracle of the descent of the manna, which was repeated every day, (excepting the sabbath) during forty years. Now an impostor, so narrowly watched as Jesus must have known himself to be, and without assistants, as he must have been at least at first, would never have attempted so many miracles, from the certainty of his being detected in some of them, though he should have succeeded in others; and a single failure would have been sufficient to expose the whole scheme.

Notwithstanding this, Jesus appears never to have omitted a single opportunity of performing the benevolent miracle of curing diseases of every kind, whoever applied to him

for that purpose. With artful management a single person, or a few persons, might appear to be blind, or lame, and suddenly to recover their sight, or the use of their limbs, when commanded so to do; but Jesus made no exception to any kind of disease; and what is much more extraordinary, any *maim*, or the total want of any limb. This was far too bold for the most artful and practised impostor to have undertaken. That so impudent an attempt as this should have succeeded, in such peculiarly unfavorable circumstances, and to the extent that all history, and the present state of things, shews that it did succeed, would be a greater miracle than any that are recorded by the evangelists.

It is probable that but few of the miracles performed by Jesus are recorded in the histories we have of him. All the evangelists allude to great numbers not specified by them.

Thus after the cure of Peter's wife's mother at Capernaum it is said, Mark i. 32. And at even when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and those that were possessed with demons. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many demons.

When he had left the city at this time we read Matt. iv. 23. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, those that were possessed with demons, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

Immediately before the mission of the twelve, it is said, Matt. ix. 35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. In his charge to the twelve he said, Matt. x. 8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely ye have received, freely give. On their return we read, Mark vi. 13. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.

To the Messengers from John, Jesus said, Matt. xi. 4. Go and shew John again those things which you do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.

When he had cured the man who had the withered hand in the synagogue, it is added, Matt. xii. 15. Jesus withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all. In the woe that he pronounced upon the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, he alludes to miracles wrought in them, but not specified by any of the Evangelists. Matt. xi. 21. Woe unto thee Chorazin, Woe unto the Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

After Jesus had cast out the demon from the Syrophenician woman, we read, Matt. xv. 30, 31. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he cured them. Insomuch that they wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

The miracles of which the Evangelists have given a particular account, seem to have been selected as the most remarkable. Yet in the history of little more than a year (for the public ministry of Jesus did not extend beyond this short period) they particularly mention the following, probably only as more distinguished by their circumstances than the rest. Of *lepers*, mention is made of one who met him at the foot of the mountain on which he had delivered the discourse, of which we have an account in Matthew and Luke; and the ten who applied to him at the same time, one of whom was a Samaritan. Of a *fever* he cured Peter's wife's mother at Capernaum, and a nobleman's son of the same place, when he was at a distance. Of *blind* men there was one whom he met near Bethsaida; another, who had been blind from his birth, at Jerusalem; and two near to Jericho. Of the *palsy* he cured a centurion's servant at Capernaum before he came to the house. Another